

Supporting Your Child's Emotional Needs During the Pandemic

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Think about the past couple months since the pandemic started to sweep the nation; how has it affected you? For most of us, it has limited almost all aspects of everyday life. This includes our work, interactions with friends and family, and even the way we get the essentials we need, like groceries and toiletries.

However, let's think for a minute of what the kids have lost since the start of the pandemic. The list includes things like time with their friends, visits with cousins and grandparents, birthday parties, religious celebrations surrounding Easter, interaction with their teachers, field trips, classroom parties, field days, and so much more. Basically, the pandemic has removed so much of the fun and enjoyment of childhood!

Join us as we explore some basic childhood psychology before learning more about how to meet a child's emotional needs during the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond.

What are the emotional needs of a child?

Before we dive into ways to support kids through the pandemic, it's important to have a basic understanding of emotional needs that children have in regard to their general wellbeing. Some of the needs all kids have are the following:

- To feel loved

All children must feel that their parents have their backs. Unconditional love is one of the most important things parents can show for a child to help them feel everything else listed below.

- To feel important

Kids must understand that they are important to the world and will grow up to make a difference. This notion starts at home as parents work to make their children feel needed.

- To feel secure

One of the basics needs for all of us in life is to feel safe. For our littlest learners, it's important that they feel secure from birth. Even babies must be confident that their caregivers can be trusted, and that their home and family are sources of security.

- To feel good about him/herself

Self-esteem is something that all humans begin forming from a very early age. For kids to feel empowered to learn and accomplish goals, they must feel that they can reasonably tackle their challenges. Children need to have confidence in themselves and parents are responsible for helping kids to form a positive relationship with themselves.

- To feel included

Nobody likes to be left out! It's important to help our little ones feel like they belong. By doing so, we help them accomplish other needs, such as feeling important and positive self-esteem.

All that said, the above list represents the basic emotional needs of a child, even when not presented with an ongoing national crisis, such as the one we find ourselves in right now. It's important to keep those special needs at the forefront of decision-making when parents consider ways to get their families through this pandemic. Let's continue to explore how to support emotional health considering the trauma experienced during the past few months.

How to Support Your Child's Emotional Needs During the Pandemic



Now that it's clear that kids are going to need a little extra TLC during these strange times, definitely do the following to ensure that little ones receive all the support they need:

- Provide an age-appropriate explanation and information

Some parents might think that the best solution is to shield children from the scary situation the world faces at this moment in time. It's easy to understand why; as parents, we never want our kids to suffer, and we would do anything to keep them from experiencing sadness or hardship. However, as the old adage goes, "honesty is the best policy".

It's crucial to remain honest with children, even in the face of a scary national crisis. This is for a variety of reasons: to keep kids safe by educating them about social distancing and best hygiene practices, and also to help them face frightening situation and learn how to work through it and adapt.

To do this, you don't want to simply turn on the news and talk about it as if your preschooler is an adult. It might be scary to hear you tell your friends "stay safe" at the

end of a phone call. Instead, use language and ideas that are appropriate for your child's age, comprehension, and maturity level.

- Remain calm, sensitive, and supportive

Moods are contagious. Children are also keen observers of their surroundings and the emotions of their own caregivers. That said, kids are able to tell if parents are feeling anxious, depressed, scared, or stressed. They might not understand why, but it will also scare them, too. That is why it is important to put on a brave face and remain calm, even throughout a time of great uncertainty.

Additionally, remember that everyone reacts differently to crisis situations. Some children will have more subtle reactions than others. Stay receptive to your child's needs and understand that it might be the reason they are asking for just one more bedtime story, or a few more minutes of playtime at the end of the day. Of course, it's important not to jump at your child's every whim and request but remain reasonable and understand that most kids just want to spend a little bit more time with parents to help them feel safe and secure.

- Find ways to keep social connections alive during social distancing

Social distancing has been tough for almost everyone. Ordinarily, your children are used to playing with their friends at recess, working in groups in the classroom, visiting neighbors for playdates, and visiting with family members like grandma or grandpa. Thanks to the pandemic, all of the above social activities have been disrupted, with families being stuck at home in a makeshift quarantine to prevent the spread of the virus.

To help bolster your child's needs for social interaction, it's important to find different ways to keep your kids connected to others. Visit with cousins or grandparents virtually via FaceTime or Zoom, to help them see their family in real time, even if they can't be with them. Encourage children to keep in touch with their classmates and friends as much as possible.

- For older kids, this might mean that they can use their iPad for iMessaging or FaceTime but be sure to monitor their communications carefully.
- For preschoolers, reach out to other parents to organize virtual playdates and plan a few games they can play during a video-calling session.

Organize neighborhood car parades for friends to see and wave at each other and walk through the neighborhood to write messages on driveways using sidewalk chalk. Given a

little bit of creativity, there are ways to keep your child's social activities alive, even from a distance.

- Practice the 3 R's: routine, reassurance, and regulation

As every teacher can tell you, all children crave structure and routine in their day. This helps to fulfill their natural need to feel safe and secure regarding their daily activities and the status of the world around them. To do this at home, form a predictable routine. Now that school is ending and summer is just beginning, it's important to set a new daily structure that accommodates your family's personal schedule, taking into consideration your child's needs. During this process, provide ample reassurance and project confidence over the situation at hand, even in these uncertain times.

Finally, promote healthy self-regulation by validating a child's concerns, and ensuring that everything that they are feeling is absolutely normal. Help kids to understand that the frightening emotions they feel are understandable and offer coping strategies to help them work through their stress. Coping techniques could include anything that helps them to calm down, including deep breathing exercises, an activity that they enjoy such as drawing or listening to music, meditation or yoga practices, or even just taking a walk.

- Keep children's minds busy and bodies active

Last but not least, don't forget to keep kids engaged in learning and exploring, while providing opportunities for physical exercise and fun! Don't forget to foster both your child's intellectual and emotional growth, keeping in mind that staying engaged with learning and exercise can also meet your child's emotional needs.

There's no doubt that kids across the country are dealing with tough times due to the pandemic, just as parents are grappling with their own challenges, too. It's crucial to remember that parents must provide the support needed to get children through this unprecedented crisis. Follow the advice listed above, and don't forget to keep those kiddos engaged and learning throughout the entire pandemic using the quality resources provided by Kids Academy!

